

inch a cardinal, fearing, it seemed, nothing and having an opinion, it seemed, on everything.

For thousands of veterans, it's the memory of a chaplain who counseled them, heard their confessions, and attained the rank of admiral. For the working men and women, it will be the memory of an advocate, someone who rose to great prominence but remained the proud son of a union man who honored hard work.

The poor and immigrants of this city will always remember their staunch friend who defended their interests and understood their struggles. Many families remember the church leader who came to AIDS patients with care and love.

Parents here and in Scranton will remember the priest who gave so much time and special care to boys and girls with disabilities. And the world will remember the gallant defender of children and their vulnerability, innocence, and their right to be born.

Many decades from now, these living memories of the man will begin to pass. Fewer and fewer will have known the sound of his voice, the largeness of his presence, the sting of his rebuke, his marvelous sense of humor, or the breadth of his compassion. But future generations will know at least this about the 11th leader of the archdiocese: He was a man who left a mark on his time; a moral leader not only in title but in truth; a defender of the faith, the very kind who have kept the faith alive for two millennia; a great man in a high place; and also for 80 years on this Earth, a good person, a cheerful giver, and a much-loved soul.

Posterity will know this: The Congress of the United States, in respect and gratitude, directed that a gold medal be struck bearing Cardinal O'Connor's name and image. And on this day, on behalf of the American people, I'm honored to present the Congressional Gold Medal to the family and to the successor of John Cardinal O'Connor.

God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. at St. Patrick's Cathedral. In his remarks, he referred to His Eminence Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop of New York and successor to Cardinal O'Connor; Gov. George E. Pataki of New York and his wife, Elizabeth; Mayor Rudolph W.

Giuliani of New York City; Mary Ward and Dorothy Hamilton, sisters of Cardinal O'Connor; Rev. Lloyd J. Ogilvie, Chaplain, U.S. Senate; Rev. Daniel P. Coughlin, Chaplain, U.S. House of Representatives; and opera singer Maureen O'Flynn.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Medical Organization Leaders

July 11, 2001

Thank you. Be seated, please. Dr. Perry, thank you very much. It's great to welcome you up from Monroe, Louisiana. Mr. Secretary—Madame Secretary, thank you all for being here. It's good to see Members of the United States Congress; thank you all for coming; my fellow Americans.

We've just come from a great meeting with leaders of medical organizations that represent over 300,000 doctors—specialists, men and women from around our country who are deeply concerned about the state of the practice of medicine, health care professionals that care deeply about not only the practice of medicine but, more importantly, the patients that they see, men and women whose whole life is aimed at improving the lives of their fellow citizens, as a result of their brilliant skills. We had a frank discussion about medicine today and where medicine is headed. And we share a concern that many patients are not receiving the quality of care that we would hope they would receive.

And so we're now debating this issue in Congress, how best to improve the quality of care without unnecessarily running up the cost of medicine, without encouraging more lawsuits, which will eventually cause people not to be able to have health insurance.

And there's a good alternative working through the House of Representatives that my administration supports. It's called the Fletcher bill. It's a piece of legislation which says that patients ought to have direct access to specialists. These men and women who represent specialists all across America embrace this bill, the bill that my administration supports, because of direct access to specialists. And that's important. It's a very important part of the legislation.

I know there's some talk that the bill that came out of the Senate is the only one that

the doctors in America are for. Well, I think if people take a good look and those who hadn't made up their mind yet in the House listened to the voices up here, they will hear there's plenty of doctors who believe that the Fletcher bill is the proper alternative, so patients get the quality of care they need without the fear of losing health insurance, without the fear that businesses, large and small, might decide rather than being sued all the time and, therefore, drop provisions for health care in total.

That's something we don't want in our society. We want more people covered, not less. We want the cost of medicine not to be driven up by unnecessary litigation. The Fletcher bill provides safeguards.

Now there's another issue that's important, and that is the external review process. It's an incredibly important part of any medical system—future medical system, if we want it to work. And that process basically says, if you're a patient and you and your doc don't agree with the decisions made by the health insurance company, that you ought to be able to appeal to a panel of doctors. And if the panel of doctors rule in your favor, the insurance company is obligated to move forward. If not, it becomes a cause of action in a court of law.

I just had the opportunity of meeting with Helen Barnes, a nurse-practitioner from Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Thank you for being here, Helen. She was in an automobile accident, and ever since, she's suffered severe muscular problems in her back and her neck. So she and her doc thought that she ought to have a mammoplasty to ease her pain. Her HMO denied her request for surgery. She then appealed the decision to an external medical review process. They ruled in her favor.

She took her case to an objective review process, a review panel, and they said she and her doc were right. And so she's going to receive the surgery she needs this January. I said, "Why not sooner?" She said, "Because she can't find time to get off work sooner." [Laughter]

But nevertheless, the process works. And it's so important that we have a tight external review process, one that addresses patients' needs, not the needs of people who want to

sue everybody; one who's focused on the patients of America so that they can take their claims to a panel of experts—medical experts, and have their problems addressed as quickly and as soon as possible.

The issue we ought to be discussing is quality of care for patients. That's the whole focus of medicine. And that ought to be the focus of any legislation that comes out of the United States Congress. And the Fletcher bill that is now being debated on the House floor represents the kind of legislation that my administration can support, that thousands of doctors across America support, and I believe most Americans will support when they hear the facts and the differences between the two pieces of legislation that are now being debated on the House floor.

I want to thank our doctor friends for being here. I want to thank you for your service to your respective communities. The docs in America really are a part of—medical professionals are a part of really what makes this country great. We've got the best health care in the world—by far, the best health care in the world—and we've got to make sure that any legislation, any laws passed out of Washington, enhances the health care for America and doesn't hurt it. And I believe the Fletcher bill will help and enhance the great medical care that we have in our country.

Thank you all for coming. Thank you for the endorsement of a good piece of legislation, and may God bless your work, and God bless America.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:50 p.m. in Presidential Hall in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Priscilla Perry, M.D., representative, American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery.

Statement on Action by the House Ways and Means Committee on the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

July 11, 2001

I commend the House Ways and Means Committee for passing legislation today that includes key elements of my Faith-Based and